



Packing soil samples for shipment

David H. Hardy, Ph.D., Soil Testing Section Chief

Agronomic News for North Carolina Growers — September 2004 www.ncagr.com/agronomi/ (919) 733-2655

- Use sample boxes provided by NCDA&CS and fill about 2/3 full. Allow wet soil to air dry before placing in boxes. Wet soil can cause sample boxes to disintegrate.
- Use permanent black ink to label the sample box and fill out the information form. Pencil is not legible, and some pens have water-soluble ink that smears or bleaches when wet.
- Close box flaps securely to prevent spillage during shipment. Loose flaps allow soil to spill from the box and become mixed with other samples. Do not place tape or rubber bands around boxes. If you fold and close boxes properly, samples will arrive at the laboratory intact.
- Place individual sample boxes upright in a sturdy cardboard container for shipping. Package no more than 40 to 50 samples (less than 50 lb) per shipping container.
- Arrange samples in the shipping container in the same order that they are listed on the information form. Doing so helps ensure that you have placed all your samples in the container. It also helps the receiving clerk at the laboratory arrange your samples quickly and accurately for processing.
- Pack individual sample boxes firmly in the shipping container. Place newspaper or cardboard between layers to help keep samples intact and lessen problems with moisture. Do not stack samples more than three boxes high. If the boxes do not fill the shipping container, stuff newspaper around them. Do not use styrofoam "peanuts." They stick to boxes and make labels hard to read.
- Place the sample information forms that correspond to the samples in a plastic ziplock bag inside the shipping container with the samples.
- Label each shipping container with your name and address. If you are sending multiple shipping containers, write "Box 1 of 3," "Box 2 of 3," "Box 3 of 3," etc., to ensure that samples stay together when they arrive at the lab. Make sure each box contains the appropriate information form(s).
- If you bring your samples to the laboratory, notify the soil receiving clerk that you have soil samples.
- When you send samples to the lab, be sure to indicate on the shipping container that the box contains soil samples. Samples sent via UPS or FedEx should be addressed to our physical address (see below). Samples sent through the U.S. Postal Service should be addressed to our mailing address (see below).

NCDA&CS AGRONOMIC DIVISION, SOIL TESTING SECTION

Physical address: 4300 REEDY CREEK RD., RALEIGH NC 27607-6465

Mailing address: 1040 MAIL SERVICE CENTER, RALEIGH NC 27699-1040